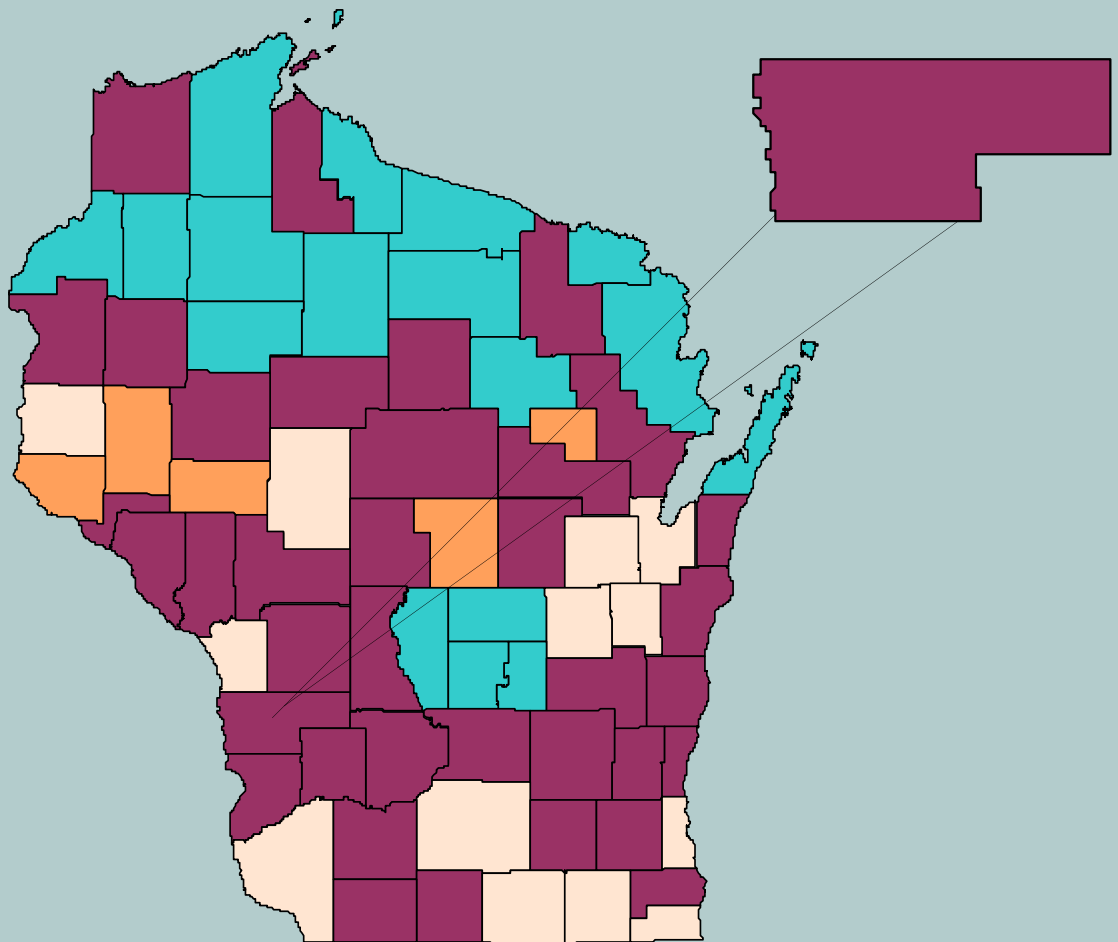


# Vernon County Workforce Profile

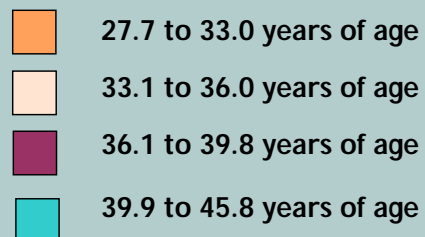
Median Age by County, 2000



Your complete  
guide to the  
state of the  
labor force of  
today and a  
glimpse into  
the economy of  
tomorrow.



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Workforce Development  
October 2002



Source: Census 2000 of the United States



## County Population

During the first year of the new millennium, Vernon County's population increased one percent, a bit more than the rate of growth reported at the state and national level.

However, the increase in Vernon County's population between the 1990 and 2000 Censuses roughly kept pace with the state growth rate but fell short of the national rate of growth for the decade. The 1990 Census reported Vernon County's total population at 25,617. The population total reported for Vernon County from Census 2000 was 28,506, an increase of 2,439 and a 9.5 percent growth rate. During the 90s decade the national population grew by 13.1 percent and the state population grew by 9.6 percent.

Some of the fastest growing Vernon County municipalities during the 90s decade include; Clinton - grew 23.9 percent, Bergen - grew by 7.7 percent, and Westby - where population grew by a 9.5 percent rate. Population growth in Vernon County occurred primarily in the western part of the county and along the northern shared border with La Crosse County. During the 90s decade a noticeable number of people who work in La Crosse County

moved to Vernon County but kept their jobs in La Crosse County. There are parts of Northern Vernon County that have become 'bedroom' communities for persons employed in La Crosse County. Population increases in Eastern Vernon County were very modest when compared to population growth along the county's western and northwestern borders.

When looking at population changes at the county level, there are a number of factors that contribute to growth or decline in the county's population. By examining the components of change in the county's population, which include births, deaths, and migration, we see that Vernon County is heavily dependent on migration of residents into the county to increase the county's population. About 75 percent of the population increase recorded in Vernon County in the 90s decade was due to persons moving into the county and of the 273 new residents in the county in 2001, 228 were residents that moved into the county, while only 45 new residents were added as a result of the county's birth rate exceeding its death rate.

(Continued on page 2)

### Total Population

|               | 2000 Census | January 1, 2001<br>Estimate | Percent<br>change |
|---------------|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| United States | 281,421,906 | 283,474,000                 | 0.7%              |
| Wisconsin     | 5,363,675   | 5,400,449                   | 0.7%              |
| Vernon County | 28,056      | 28,329                      | 1.0%              |

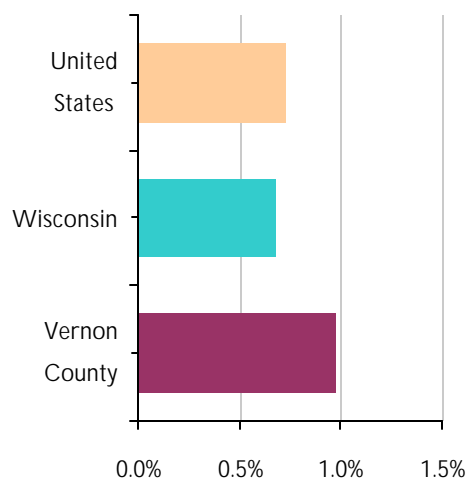
### Ten Largest Municipalities

|                  |       |       |       |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Viroqua, City    | 4,335 | 4,357 | 0.5%  |
| Westby, City     | 2,045 | 2,069 | 1.2%  |
| Viroqua, Town    | 1,560 | 1,573 | 0.8%  |
| Clinton, Town    | 1,354 | 1,371 | 1.3%  |
| Bergen, Town     | 1,317 | 1,337 | 1.5%  |
| Hillsboro, City  | 1,302 | 1,315 | 1.0%  |
| Jefferson, Town  | 974   | 981   | 0.7%  |
| Franklin, Town   | 923   | 926   | 0.3%  |
| Christiana, Town | 871   | 870   | -0.1% |
| Hamburg, Town    | 848   | 855   | 0.8%  |

\* Vernon portion only

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services, 2002

### Population Growth 2000-2001



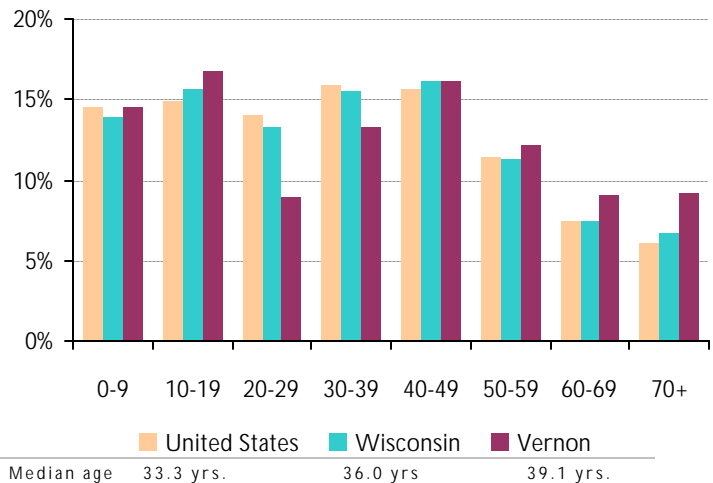


Vernon County, as many Wisconsin Counties, is experiencing an aging resident population. Vernon County's average age has been on the rise for several decades now. In 1980, the average age of a Vernon County resident was 34, in 1990 it was 36.2, and by the year 2000 the average age of a Vernon County resident had climbed to 39.1 years old.

When examining the age cohort charts on the right, one notices that the percentage of the Vernon County resident population in the 20-29 and 30-39 year old age cohorts make up a substantially smaller part of Vernon County's population than those same cohorts do on a state or national level. It would appear that a large percentage of the population in the 10-19 year old age cohort migrates out of the county once their high school education is complete.

The percentage of the Vernon County resident population in the 50-59, 60-69, and 70+ year old age cohorts make up a substantially larger part of Vernon County's population than those same cohorts do on a state or national level. These cohorts will continue to gain population share in Vernon

2000 Age Group Comparison



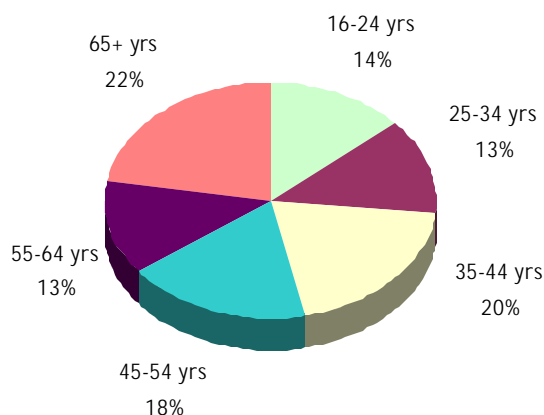
Source: US Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Census 2000*

County in the future. The demographic shift away from a youthful population toward an older population will present future challenges for Vernon County employers.

Employers in Vernon County that count on workers aged 16-29 are finding it increasingly difficult to find and retain workers. They are turning to other age cohorts and different recruitment methods in order to help fill their needs.

## County Civilian Labor Force

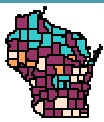
Vernon County Labor Force Age Groups



Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Census 2000*

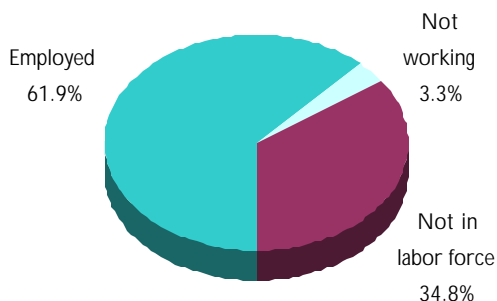
The labor force is the sum of employed and unemployed persons who are 16 years old and older. Readers should keep in mind that people who are "not working" includes people who are "unemployed" and people who are "not in the labor force". "Unemployed" does not include all people who are "not working", some people who are not working are not technically unemployed. Examples of people who are not working but who are not unemployed are: retirees, fulltime students choosing not to work, persons with too many employment barriers to enter the work force, persons that have become discouraged and stopped looking for work, or other people who choose not to work or look for work. Persons in a prison, mental institution, or nursing home are not counted as mem-

(Continued on page 3)



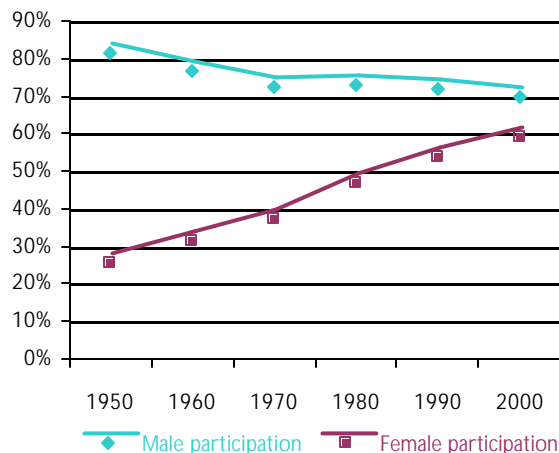
## State of Wisconsin - Vernon County

### 2001 Labor Force Participation



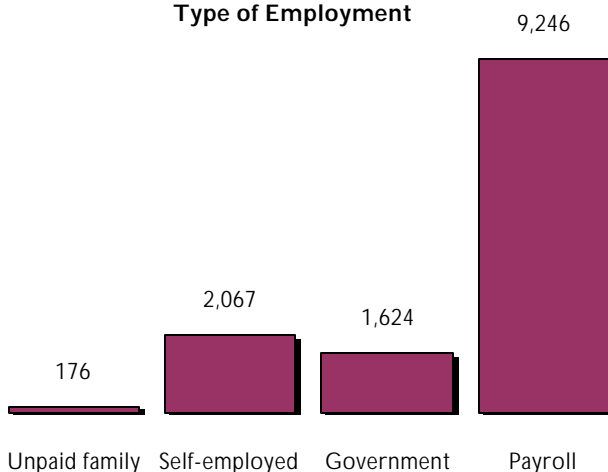
Source: Estimated from WI Dept. of Administration population estimates, Jan. 2001, US Census Bureau, and WI Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

### Labor Force Participation of Male and Female Residents



Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Census 2000*

### Type of Employment



Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Census 2000*

bers of the labor force, nor are they counted as unemployed. The pie chart displayed on the left provides estimates of employed, unemployed and those "not in the labor force" as a percentage of the civilian non-institutional population. The "participation rate" is the percentage of the total resident population, aged 16 and over, who are working or seeking employment. Many social and economic factors influence the participation rate in a given area. The number one reason for the dramatic shift in the rate during the last several decades has been caused by the increasing number of females entering the workforce.

In 2001, the participation rate in Vernon County was 65.2 percent, a number that increased in Vernon County throughout the past decade. Vernon County has a substantially lower participation rate than does the nation (67.2) or the State of Wisconsin (73.5). Vernon County rated 52 in participation rate out of Wisconsin's 72 counties in 2001.

Another interesting trend that can be analyzed as a result of data released as part of the 2000 census is the changing role of men and women in the workforce. Using data from 1950 to 2000, we see that, over the past fifty years that participation by gender in the county's labor force has followed two divergent trends. Between 1950 and 1980, the male labor force participation rate declined in the county, but has remained relatively stable at 70 percent for the past twenty years. In stark contrast, the county's female labor force participation rate has risen significantly over the course of the past half-century from around twenty five percent in 1950 to just over sixty percent in 2000. While much has been written about the socioeconomic factors that have led to an increasing number of women in the workforce, the growth that has occurred over the past twenty years has been driven by a pair of demographic and economic factors. First, the female percentage of the population has increased significantly, both nationally and statewide. Therefore, increased participation is a function, in part of an increase in available female workers. Second, and perhaps, most importantly, the economy of Vernon County has continued a pattern of transition from manufacturing and other "hard industries" to a ser-

(Continued on page 4)

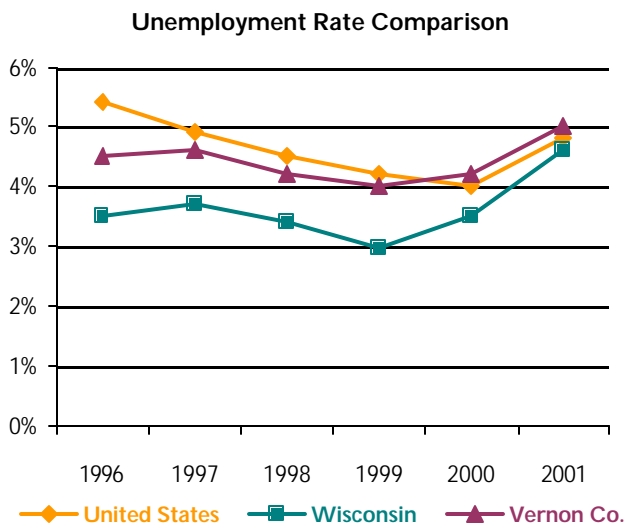


## State of Wisconsin - Vernon County

vice-oriented economy, as indicated by the growth of employment in retail trade and service industries, for example. As the economy has shifted away from a focus in traditional industries and occupations, which are commonly male-dominated, an increasing number of opportunities in fields such as health care and education services have been created, thus further spurring growth in female labor force participation.

Vernon County workers are mobile. But they are 'going it alone' more than ever before. In the 1990 Census, 60 percent of workers drove alone and 13 percent carpooled. According to Census 2000, 71 percent of Vernon County residents drive to work alone and 11 percent carpool.

The time it takes Vernon County residents to get to work is increasing. In 1990, the average Vernon County worker took 19.3 minutes to get to work, in the year 2000 that spiked to an average commute in minutes of 23.7 minutes. Increased employment growth in Vernon County, coupled with population growth along the western and northwest borders of the county, and the 'cottage county' effect, led to

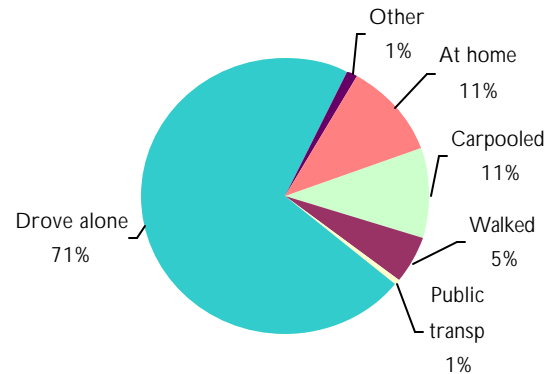


### Vernon County Civilian Labor Force Data

|                   | 1996   | 1997   | 1998   | 1999   | 2000   | 2001   |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Labor Force       | 13,600 | 13,800 | 14,000 | 13,400 | 13,700 | 13,900 |
| Employed          | 13,000 | 13,200 | 13,400 | 12,900 | 13,200 | 13,200 |
| Unemployed        | 620    | 640    | 590    | 530    | 580    | 700    |
| Unemployment Rate | 4.5%   | 4.6%   | 4.2%   | 4.0%   | 4.2%   | 5.0%   |

Source: WI Department of Workforce Development, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, revised March 2002

### County Travel-to-Work Patterns



Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Census 2000*

Vernon County residents driving farther and longer to work.

One of the last pieces of data released from the Census is destination county commuting data. That is, data on which county residents are driving to other counties for work and how many workers are staying within their county of residence for work. Destination county commuting data from Census 2000 has not been released yet. Census 2000 data released as of this writing does indicate that 63 percent of Vernon County residents work within Vernon County. About 35 percent of Vernon County residents work in another Wisconsin county and two percent of Vernon County residents work in a state other than Wisconsin.

Shifting briefly from our discussion of the employed labor force to a discussion of the unemployed labor force, the chart at the left illustrates the shifts in unemployment over the past five years nationally, statewide, and within Vernon County. As is apparent, the county's annual unemployment rate has followed a pattern similar to the nation. Vernon County's unemployment rate has been lower than the national rate in four out of the six years graphed on the left.



## County Industry Employment

### Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment

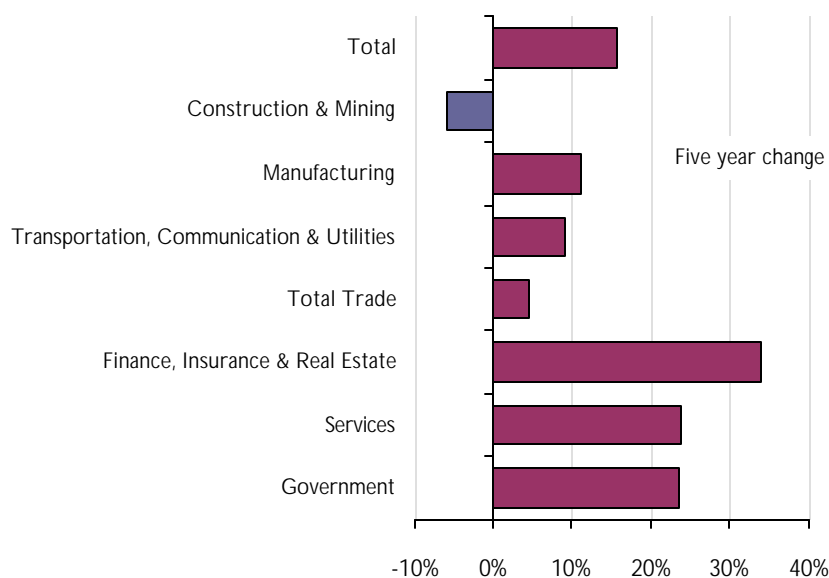
|  | 1996  | 1997  | 1998  | 1999  | 2000  | 2001  | Percent change |        |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|--------|
|  |       |       |       |       |       |       | 1 year         | 5 year |
| <b>Total</b>                               | 7,098 | 7,377 | 7,751 | 8,037 | 8,244 | 8,223 | -0.3%          | 15.8%  |
| <b>Goods Producing</b>                     | 1,089 | 1,125 | 1,141 | 1,207 | 1,224 | 1,169 | -4.5%          | 7.3%   |
| Construction & Mining                      | 243   | 255   | 253   | 311   | 306   | 228   | -25.3%         | -6.0%  |
| Manufacturing                              | 846   | 870   | 888   | 897   | 918   | 940   | 2.4%           | 11.2%  |
| Durable                                    | 431   | 430   | 473   | 537   | 581   | 605   | 4.2%           | 40.5%  |
| Nondurable                                 | 415   | 440   | 415   | 360   | 337   | 335   | -0.7%          | -19.3% |
| <b>Service Producing</b>                   | 6,010 | 6,252 | 6,611 | 6,830 | 7,020 | 7,054 | 0.5%           | 17.4%  |
| Transportation, Communications & Utilities | 327   | 325   | 324   | 337   | 346   | 357   | 3.2%           | 9.2%   |
| Total Trade                                | 1,903 | 1,982 | 1,995 | 2,105 | 2,120 | 1,991 | -6.1%          | 4.6%   |
| Wholesale                                  | 471   | 497   | 515   | 532   | 494   | 433   | -12.3%         | -8.0%  |
| Retail                                     | 1,431 | 1,485 | 1,480 | 1,573 | 1,626 | 1,558 | -4.2%          | 8.8%   |
| Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate        | 284   | 311   | 330   | 336   | 365   | 380   | 4.3%           | 34.0%  |
| Services & Misc.                           | 1,780 | 1,827 | 1,983 | 2,058 | 2,099 | 2,205 | 5.0%           | 23.9%  |
| Total Government                           | 1,716 | 1,808 | 1,979 | 1,993 | 2,090 | 2,120 | 1.5%           | 23.6%  |

Source: WI Department of Workforce Development, Nonfarm wage and salary estimates, revised March 2002

Nonfarm wage and salary employment measures the number of jobs within a county excluding agricultural, military, and self-employed workers. This data measures the number of jobs within the county without consideration of where the job-holder lives. Thus, this information presented on this page is often referred to as "place of work" data. Better than

one in three Vernon County residents commute outside of their county of residence to their jobs; this is a significant reason why the number of residents living in Vernon that are employed was almost 5,700 larger than the number of jobs located within the county in 2001.

### Employment Change by Industry Division: 1996 to 2001



Source: WI DWD, Nonfarm wage and salary estimates, revised March 2002

Another reason for the difference between the two sets of data is that while the statistics detailed on this page do not include individual agricultural employment, employment numbers derived from the unemployment statistics program (as shown at the bottom of page 4) do. According to a 1996 report by the University of Wisconsin-Extension, out of all counties, Vernon has the third highest percentage of jobs that were farm and farm-related in Wisconsin. Vernon was one of only four counties with more than 40 percent farm/farm related employment, the exact percentage of farm and farm related employment in Vernon was 42.9 percent. Given the number of self-employed individuals as reported on the bottom of page three, it is reasonable to assume farm employment is still significant today in Vernon County.



## State of Wisconsin - Vernon County

### Top 10 Private Employers

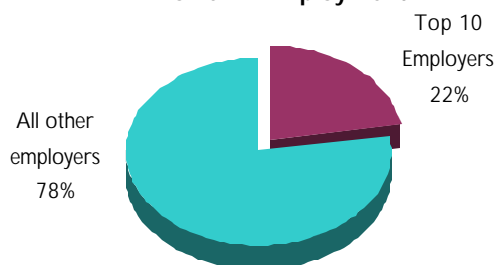
| Company                           | Product or Service                 | Size    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------|
| Vernon Memorial Hospital          | General Hospital                   | 250-499 |
| Nelson Industries                 | Automotive Mufflers                | 250-499 |
| Bethel Home And Services          | Nursing and Personal Care Provider | 100-249 |
| Wal-Mart                          | Retailer                           | 100-249 |
| Coulee Region Organic Produce     | Growers Association                | 100-249 |
| St. Joseph's Community Health     | General Hospital                   | 100-249 |
| Vernon Area Rehabilitation Center | Training/Vocational Rehabilitation | 100-249 |
| NCR                               | Commercial Printing                | 100-249 |
| Dairyland Power                   | Electric Services                  | 100-249 |
| Nelson Mill & Agri-Center         | Farm Supplies/Animal Feed          | 50-99   |

### Top 10 Industry Groups

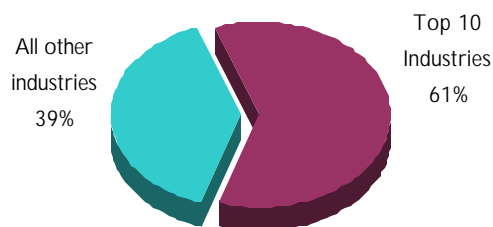
| Industry Group                        | March 2001 |           | Numeric change |        |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-----------|----------------|--------|
|                                       | Employers  | Employees | 1-year         | 5-year |
| Educational Services                  | 9          | 1,129     | 33             | 102    |
| Health Services                       | 24         | 917       | 20             | 118    |
| Eating and Drinking Places            | 40         | 566       | -20            | 98     |
| Executive, Legislative, and General   | 34         | 516       | 29             | 18     |
| Social Services                       | 18         | 436       | -13            | 48     |
| Industrial Machinery and Equipment    | *          | *         | *              | *      |
| Wholesale Trade-Nondurable Goods      | 21         | 313       | -44            | -35    |
| Automotive Dealers & Service Stations | 20         | 262       | -3             | 24     |
| General Merchandise Stores            | *          | *         | *              | *      |
| Depository Institutions               | 9          | 240       | 7              | 48     |

\*data suppressed to maintain confidentiality

**Top 10 Employers' Share of Nonfarm Employment**



**Top 10 Industry Group Share of Nonfarm Employment**



Source: WI Department of Workforce Development, ES-202 file tape, December 2001

There are a total of 623 employers in Vernon County. The top ten private sector employers employ 22 percent of all workers working in Vernon County.

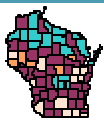
Manufacturing is not a major employment source for Vernon County residents who stay within their county of residence to work. Only two of the ten largest private employers are in the manufacturing

industry and only one of the ten largest industries is in manufacturing.

Turning now to a discussion of the impact of the county's industry composition on wages paid in the county, we see that Vernon County lags behind the state in its wage levels. In 2001, the average wage paid to employees in Vernon County was \$21,205

(Continued on page 7)





## State of Wisconsin - Vernon County

which is 31.4 percent below the state average.

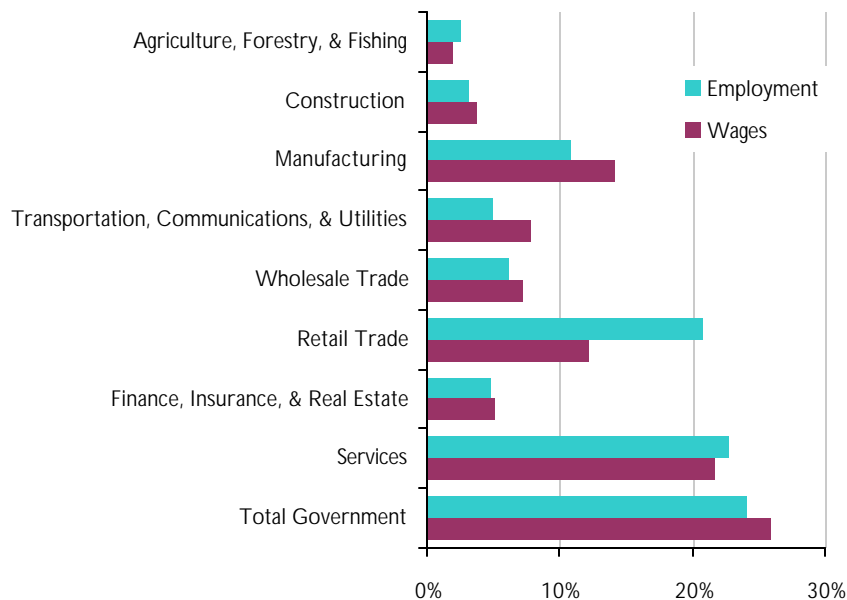
The greatest differential in average wages between Vernon County and statewide levels occurs within the finance, insurance, and real estate industry (FIRE), where workers earn about 55 percent of the statewide average. Typically, major FIRE operations center around metropolitan areas, of which, Vernon County has none. In addition, most of the major FIRE operations in Wisconsin take place in the eastern or south central parts of the state.

As in many smaller non-metropolitan counties, wages in the construction industry in Vernon County lag below the statewide average. Often this indicates lower levels of unionization in the construction industry in smaller counties, as compared to Wisconsin Metropolitan Areas.

Retail trade employment represents 20.8 percent of employment, yet only 12.2 percent of the wages paid in Vernon County. The wages in the retail industry represent a significantly smaller proportion of total wages than employment, because the industry employs a large number of entry-level workers.

Manufacturing employment represents 10.9 percent of total employment and 14.1 percent of wages paid in Vernon County. Overtime wages influence the total earnings of many manufacturing workers. In addition, entry level wages in manufacturing are higher than the entry level wages found in the retail trade and service sectors.

**Employment & Wage Distribution by Industry Division**



**Annual Average Wage By Industry Division**

|   | Vernon Co.<br>Annual Average<br>Wage | Wisconsin<br>Annual Average<br>Wage | Percent of<br>State Average | 1-year<br>percent<br>change | 5-year<br>percent<br>change |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| All Industries*                             | \$ 21,205                            | \$ 30,922                           | 68.6%                       | 4.4%                        | 20.9%                       |
| Agriculture, Forestry, & Fishing            | \$ 17,213                            | \$ 22,565                           | 76.3%                       | 4.2%                        | -2.7%                       |
| Construction                                | \$ 25,511                            | \$ 39,011                           | 65.4%                       | -2.6%                       | 23.5%                       |
| Manufacturing                               | \$ 27,510                            | \$ 39,739                           | 69.2%                       | 4.3%                        | 19.4%                       |
| Transportation, Communications, & Utilities | \$ 33,941                            | \$ 36,639                           | 92.6%                       | 2.9%                        | 17.4%                       |
| Wholesale Trade                             | \$ 24,854                            | \$ 40,521                           | 61.3%                       | 4.8%                        | 13.1%                       |
| Retail Trade                                | \$ 12,435                            | \$ 14,596                           | 85.2%                       | 4.2%                        | 20.4%                       |
| Finance, Insurance, & Real estate           | \$ 22,571                            | \$ 40,933                           | 55.1%                       | 5.3%                        | 20.1%                       |
| Services                                    | \$ 20,267                            | \$ 28,775                           | 70.4%                       | 7.8%                        | 39.5%                       |
| Total Government                            | \$ 22,862                            | \$ 33,785                           | 67.7%                       | 2.2%                        | 16.1%                       |

\* Mining excluded from table since wages were suppressed to maintain confidentiality in every county

Source: WI DWD, *Employment, Wages, and Taxes Due covered by Wisconsin's U.C. Law, 2002*



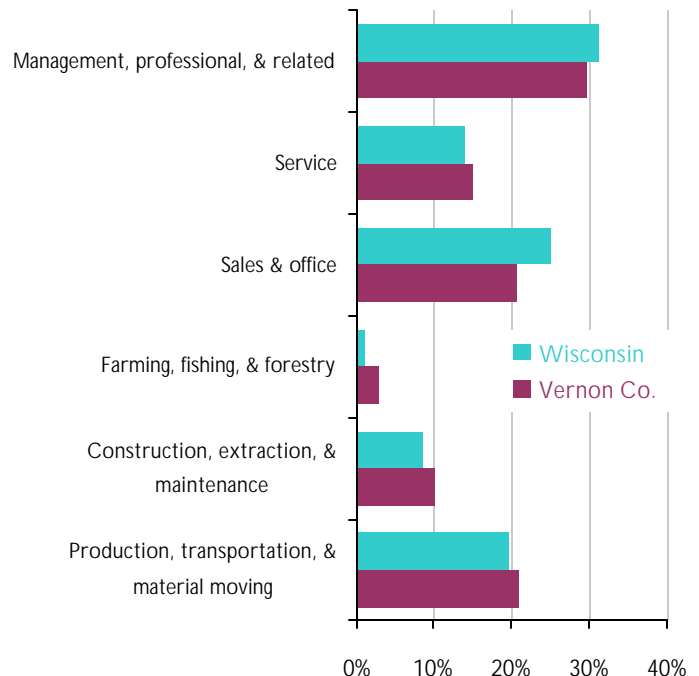


## Occupation and Education Characteristics of County Population

Among the number of other characteristics of the Vernon County workforce that warrant discussion, two bear a significant impact on the county's economy. Both the distribution of occupational groups in the workforce and the educational attainment of the population restate the traditional focus of the county's industries and economy.

The occupational distribution of the county's working population, as detailed in Census 2000 shows a number of interesting trends. First, as compared to the state, as a whole, Vernon County has a higher percentage of workers engaged in production, transportation, and material moving occupations. This group, which represents 20 percent of the working population reflects the significant importance of these occupations in the county. Additionally, a greater percentage of workers are employed in service positions, construction occupations; as well as in farming, fishing, and forestry in Vernon County than in the rest of the state. Conversely, a lesser percentage of workers are engaged in management, professional, sales, and office occupations in the county than in the state. The growth in service sector industries is reflected in the relatively high percentage of workers in service occupations, whose representation in the county exceeds the state percentage. It is important to note at this point that these occupations cannot be correlated

Employment by Occupation Group: 2000

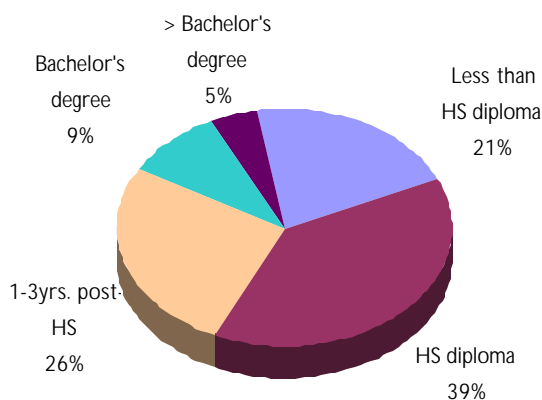


US Department of Commerce, Census 2000

with specific industries. Therefore, any conclusions drawn with respect to industry growth are difficult to make and inexact.

The educational attainment of the Vernon County population aged 25 and older is represented in the distribution to the left. The first immediate conclusion to be drawn from this distribution is the high percentage of the population that has not obtained a high school diploma. About 21 percent of Vernon County residents 25 and over have not received a high school diploma, compared a statewide average of 15 percent and a national average of 19.6 percent. On the other hand, there is a significant percentage of the Vernon County population who had completed between one and three years of education following high school. It should be noted that the presence of the high number of individuals completing some postsecondary education can be attributed, in part, to the strong technical college system in the state.

Education Attainment in 2000



Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Census 2000*



## County Income Information

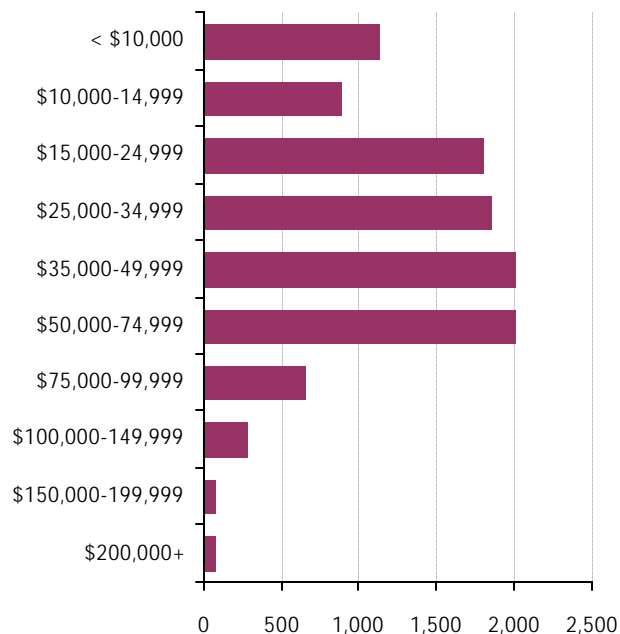
A final critical indicator of the health of the Vernon County economy is the income level, or level of economic wealth present in the county. This can be measured through a variety of means. The most popular means is through the calculation of the median household income.

In 2000, the median household income of Vernon County, which reflects earnings in 1999 was \$33,170. This is significantly lower than the state median level of \$43,791. An analysis of the distribution of income in the county, as illustrated in the chart to the right shows some trends that cause some concern. Of particular interest is the relatively low households with incomes above \$100,000. Conversely, the number of households with incomes less than \$25,000 is quite high. In counties with a high median household income, this distribution is reversed.

Another way to consider the income level present in Vernon County is to look at the number of individuals living in poverty in the county. In 1999, 9 percent of all families, 14.2 percent of individuals, and 23.5 percent of single mother families lived in poverty. All of these percentages are significantly higher than the state average.

A final measure of income commonly used is per capita personal income, which accounts for sources

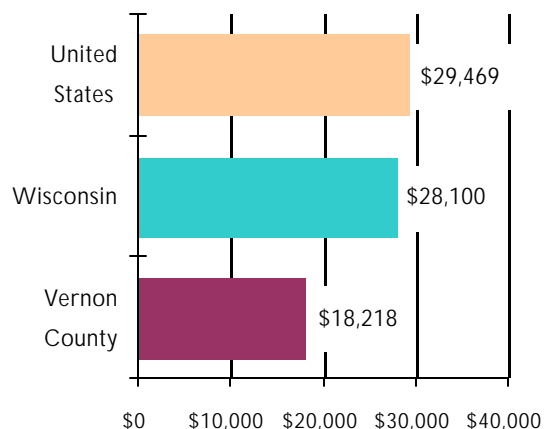
**Households by Income Range**  
Median household income in Vernon Co. \$33,178



Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Census 2000*

of income other than wages. In 2000, the PCPI of Vernon County was \$18,218, which is significantly lower than either the state or national level.

**Per Capita Personal Income 2000**



Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis

**Components of Total Personal Income: 2000**

